UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council commends UNMIH on progress made towards fulfilling its mandate; commends Haitian Government for peaceful elections, but voices concern over recent violence.

* International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia charges Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

* General Assembly elects 17 States to three-year terms in Economic and Social Council beginning on 1 January 1996.

* Disarmament and International Security Committee approves draft resolutions on arms transparency, verification and regional disarmament.

* Humanitarian and human rights concerns must be integral part of planning of peace-keeping operations, UNHCR tells Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

* Speakers voice concern about effects of conflict on women as Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee considers advancement of women.

* Secretary-General to hold live video-conference with combined crews of Shuttle-Mir docking mission tomorrow.

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The Security Council today commended the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) on the substantial progress made towards fulfilling its mandate. It also commended the Government of Haiti for holding local and legislative elections in a peaceful environment. However, in a statement by its President, Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby (Oman), the Council voiced concern over recent instances of violence in the country, and called for respect for the rule of law, national reconciliation and cooperation.

The Council emphasized that the continued participation of all Haitian parties was necessary to the successful organization of free, fair and peaceful presidential elections. It expressed satisfaction at the role of

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UNMIH and the International Civilian Mission (MICIVIH) in assisting the Haitian authorities with the electoral process. The Council also welcomed the announcement of presidential elections scheduled for 17 December, which should allow a transition of power before the termination of UNMIH's mandate on 2 February 1996. It said holding Presidential elections on schedule was a crucial step in consolidating long-lasting democracy in Haiti and ensuring a smooth transition of government.

The Council called on all political parties in Haiti to participate in the forthcoming elections and contribute to the maintenance of the secure and stable conditions necessary for their conduct. It said that the Government and people of Haiti bore primary responsibility for Haiti's political, economic and social reconstruction. Emphasizing that sustained commitment by the international community was indispensable for long-term peace and stability, it encouraged the Haitian Government to continue its dialogue with the international financial institutions.

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The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia today charged Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic with genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war. It alleged that the two were individually responsible for the mass executions of Bosnian Muslims after Serb forces overran the safe area of Srebrenica last July. Individual criminal responsibility includes committing, planning, instigating, ordering or otherwise aiding and abetting in the planning, preparation or execution of crimes referred to in the Tribunal Statute.

The Tribunal said Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Mladic were also criminally responsible as commanders for the acts of their subordinates. Command criminal responsibility is the responsibility of a superior officer for the acts of his subordinate if he knew or had reason to know that his subordinate was about to commit such acts or had done so and the superior failed to prevent or punish them.

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The General Assembly today elected the following 17 States to fill vacancies in the 54-member Economic and Social Council: Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Czech Republic, Finland, Gabon, Guyana, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia and United Kingdom. The new members will serve three-year terms, beginning on 1 January 1996.

Fourteen of the members were elected on the first ballot, while Guyana, Lebanon and Nicaragua were elected on the second ballot. Prior to the second ballot, Bolivia withdrew its candidacy. The election was held to fill seats

being vacated at the end of the current year by Bahamas, Bhutan, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, Gabon, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Zaire. States are eligible for immediate re-election.

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The First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) yesterday approved a draft resolution that would have the General Assembly call on Member States to provide data for the Register of Conventional Arms on their imports and exports of arms. Approved by 137 votes in favour to none against, with 15 abstentions, the text on transparency in armaments would also have the Assembly ask the Secretary-General to ensure that sufficient resources were made available for the operation of the Register.

The Committee approved a total of eight texts yesterday, covering such issues as verification, the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, the strengthening of international security, regional disarmament, conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, the prohibition of biological weapons, and the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan.

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Humanitarian and human rights concerns, as well as the orderly return of refugees, must be an integral part of the planning of peace-keeping operations, the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) heard today as it continued its consideration of peace-keeping operations. The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said enforcement actions carried out under Chapter VII of the Charter could compromise the principles of impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian action. For continued successful collaboration between peace-keepers and humanitarian agencies, humanitarian principles must be scrupulously respected.

The representative of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stressed the tremendous role of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the maintenance of peace in the southern Balkans. The whole operation had proved how effective preventive deployment could be, if done at the right time and with a clear mandate. The unprecedented mission could serve as a role model for future operations.

The representative of Ethiopia said Africans should take the lead in dealing with their continent's problems. However, ensuring peace and security in Africa or any other part of the world was the responsibility of the international community as a whole. Any further consideration of the initiatives on improving preparedness for conflict prevention and peace-keeping in Africa should be undertaken in cooperation and consultation with the Organization of African Unity.

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It is impossible to speak about the equality of women without rapid fulfillment of decisions on safeguarding their physical security, the representative of Azerbaijan told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) today. As the Committee continued its consideration of the advancement of women and the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the representative said the problems of displaced and refugee women were critically important as they affected not only the survival of women, but mankind.

Several other speakers expressed similar concerns about the effects of conflict on women. Syria's representative said women in the occupied Arab territories suffered from foreign occupation, which deprived them of the most sacred right, that of freedom. He called on the international community to increase efforts to end foreign occupation, so that the commitments made in Beijing would become a reality.

The observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said women had been made specific targets of violence in conflict situations. Rape and sexual abuse had brought enduring trauma into the lives of uncounted women in such conflict areas as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will tomorrow hold an interactive video-conference with the combined crews of the second Shuttle-Mir docking mission. The live video-conference will originate from the United Nations television studios in New York, while the astronauts/cosmonauts will be in the Core Module of the Mir space station.

The Secretary-General is expected to congratulate the crews and their respective nations on their mission at a time when the United Nations is marking its fiftieth anniversary. As a symbol of the new era of cooperation between nations in outer space, United Nations emblems, including the United Nations flag, as well as a commemorative parchment scroll of the Outer Space Treaty and the Rescue Agreement will be flown by the mission.

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General appoints Sylvana Foa as his Spokeswoman with effect from 1 January 1996.
- General Assembly discusses restructuring and revitalization of United Nations in economic, social and related fields.
- Disarmament and International Security Committee approves draft resolution urging immediate cessation of all nuclear testing.
- UNHCR says 1996 refugee programme will cost more than $1.1 billion; notes funding shortfall for 1995.
- Non-governmental organizations to hold working celebration for fiftieth anniversary of United Nations on Monday.
- WHO reports outbreak of yellow fever in Liberia; sends team of specialists to investigate situation.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to appoint Sylvana Foa as his Spokeswoman, with effect from 1 January 1996, Assistant Secretary-General Samir Sanbar announced today. Ms. Foa has been a journalist for over 15 years. She has served as Chief of Information for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, and has been seconded to the World Food Programme (WFP) in Rome.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali today held an interactive video-conference with the combined crews of the second Shuttle-Mir docking mission. He congratulated the astronauts and cosmonauts and their respective nations on their mission, which was taking place while the United Nations was marking its fiftieth anniversary.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General met with the Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg. They discussed, among other things, the future role of the United Nations in the region and the current peace talks in Dayton, Ohio.

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The General Assembly met today to consider the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. The representative of Algeria told the Assembly that there was a glaring difference between the time devoted to implementation of programmes and the time devoted to harmonization and coordination. Stating that the frenzy of reform for the sake of reform threatened the stability of the United Nations development system, he called for a moratorium on reform.

The representative of Pakistan called for a clear acknowledgement of the link between increased resources and enhanced efficiency. Mere managerial and administrative changes could not ensure an effective United Nations development machinery, he stressed. The representative of the United States put forward a detailed set of proposals, including a call for the shortening of the Economic and Social Council's annual substantive session to two weeks, to be held each year in New York. That session could be supplemented by shorter, more frequent special sessions, he added.

Yesterday afternoon, the Assembly filled the last remaining vacancy on the 54-member Economic and Social Council by electing Jordan from the Asian Group of States. A total of 18 new members were elected yesterday. They will serve three-year terms beginning on 1 January 1996.

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The First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) yesterday approved a draft resolution that would have the General Assembly strongly deplore all current nuclear testing and strongly urge the immediate cessation of all nuclear testing. The Assembly would also commend those nuclear-weapon States observing testing moratoriums and urge them to continue such moratoriums pending the entry into force of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. The draft was approved by 95 votes in favour to 12 against, with 45 abstentions.

Speaking before the vote, the representative of Marshall Islands said "any one single nuclear-weapon test anywhere is one test too many". He appealed to those developing countries which had "come under immense pressure by a certain country that had threatened to withhold assistance" -- to vote in favour of the resolution. The representative of France said the text was based on untrue statements and unfounded assertions. She said it was inspired "by passion rather than reason, by short-term calculations rather than long-term aims". The countries voting in its favour would, in effect, be working against the cause of non-proliferation, disarmament and peace.

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Some $116 million was pledged today at the General Assembly's Ad-hoc Committee meeting to announce voluntary contributions to the 1996 programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A total of 22 Member States and Observers announced pledges, while six States said they would contribute at a later date.

The High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, said that total needs would exceed $1.1 billion in 1996. Priority would given to funding long-term solutions for refugees and displaced persons. The agency required just under $1.3 billion for 1995, but had collected $800 million in new contributions. She asked donors to make final efforts in the next six weeks to close the funding gaps in the general programmes, the emergency operation for Rwanda and Burundi and repatriations in the Horn of Africa and to Mozambique.

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A non-governmental organization (NGO) working celebration for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations will be held in New York and Geneva on Monday. It is being organized by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) and the Department of Public Information (DPI)/NGO Executive Committee, with the support of the United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary Secretariat.

The working celebration, entitled, "The NGO/UN Partnership: The Way Forward", will bring together representatives of NGOS, governments, and the United Nations system at Headquarters in New York and at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The simultaneous gatherings will be linked by satellite and will be addressed by the Secretary-General.

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A total of 146 cases of suspected yellow fever have occurred since July in the Buchanan area of Liberia, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Six deaths from the outbreak have been reported. The WHO has sent a team of specialists to the affected area to investigate the situation and to support local health authorities and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to control the outbreak.

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